

To the Members of the Planning and Development Committee and Any Others Whom It May Concern:

As a parent of public school students in Darien, I strongly oppose the provisions in HB 7192 (including 7 through 10) and provisions in any other bill such as SB 874 (including 1 through 4), that propose: i) the creation of a Commission for the purpose of studying the forced sharing of services, redistricting or consolidation of school services and school districts; ii) developing a plan for forced shared services, redistricting or consolidation of Connecticut Public Schools; iii) implementing forced shared services, redistricting or consolidation of public schools districts; iv) penalizing school districts for NOT redistricting, consolidating, or sharing services; v) removing resources from, or limiting services to, our school district; or vi) removing or limiting local control of school districts. The reasons supporting my position include:

o My husband and I moved to our town for the schools, and the quality of our school district is what keeps us here. The locally run public schools provide a nurturing environment where teacher, student, and parental engagement is high, student learning is individualized, and achievement is encouraged and recognized.

o I have not seen any evidence indicating that regionalizing school districts will save money given the costs of combining resources and added transportation costs. More importantly, I have not seen any evidence establishing that regionalization will maintain or improve the quality of education in school districts. According to a report by Hanover Research in 2014 entitled Best Practices for School Improvement Planning, a comprehensive needs assessment of a failing school district is the first step that must be taken.

o Further, a study conducted on K-12 Regionalization in CT of behalf of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving by Rodriguez Data Solutions LLC in May 2018 (see [Hartford\\_Foundation\\_K-12\\_Regionalization\\_Report\\_05-08-18.pdf](#)) concludes that:

- regionalization or consolidation does not necessarily result in lower costs in the short or long term, and it can increase costs and negatively affect academic outcomes
- Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford school districts had higher than average per pupil expenditures notwithstanding enrollment greater than 15,000 in 2015-16
- CT districts with 2500-3000 students had the best educational outcomes with per pupil expenditures that were at average or below average levels in 2015-16
- parental involvement results in better academic outcomes and parents are more engaged when schools are small

o I am worried that regionalization or the removal of, or a reduction in, local control will result in: i) larger enrollment in schools; ii) inadequate administrative support/supervision; iii) longer transportation times for children resulting in decreased engagement, lower academic scores, and increased absenteeism; iv) a deterioration of the quality of the educational programs and academic outcomes; v) reduced teacher and community engagement; and vi) a lack of accountability for educational services, operations, and expenditures.

o I am also very concerned that regionalization's erosion of the quality of the education in our local schools will negatively affect the CT economy. If new families stop moving to CT towns because the quality of the education in the public schools has deteriorated, new businesses will not be attracted to our towns either. Moreover, existing families and businesses will leave at a greater rate than they are leaving now. This will worsen the state's fiscal crisis.

o In addition, as noted in the Hartford Foundation's study, business mergers have a 50% success rate. Given that funding a Commission, studies, and plans for regionalization would require significant CT taxpayer funds, it does not make sense to move forward with an expensive strategy when there is a 50% chance of success and CT's financial condition is poor. More importantly, the strategy could ruin the high performing schools and will not improve failing school districts. Please do not risk destroying the value in the local public school systems.

In conclusion, please oppose the provisions in HB 7192 (including 7 through 10) and any other bill such as SB 874 (including provisions 1 through 4) that propose: i) creating a Commission for the purpose of studying the forced sharing of services, redistricting or consolidating of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut public school districts, iii) implementing forced shared services, redistricting or consolidation of school districts; iv) penalizing public school districts for NOT redistricting, consolidating, or sharing services; v) removing resources from, or limiting resources to, school districts; or v) removing or limiting local control of school districts.

Thank you for your public service and for considering my testimony.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marian Cope". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marian" and the last name "Cope" clearly distinguishable.

Sincerely,  
Marian Cope  
Darien, CT